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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2006
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 9301
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 0219
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 0751
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU IMMEDIATE 3157
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU IMMEDIATE 0303
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG IMMEDIATE 0734
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI IMMEDIATE 2611
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG IMMEDIATE 7104
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 000904

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MA YING-JEOU, HU JINTAO EXCHANGE LETTERS THROUGH
KMT-CCP CHANNEL

REF: TAIPEI 0903

Classified By: Acting AIT Director Robert S. Wang,
for Reasons 1.4(B) and (D).

11. (C) Summary. President Ma Ying-jeou, elected Kuomintang (KMT) Party Chairman on July 26, received a congratulatory letter the same day from Hu Jintao, in his capacity as General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Ma sent a reply the following day thanking Hu for his message and calling for both sides to continue efforts to promote cross-strait peace and stability, according to local media. Government and party officials emphasized that congratulatory messages from CCP General Secretaries to newly-elected KMT Chairs had taken place since Lee Teng-hui was president and cautioned observers not to read too much into the most recent exchange, dismissing any talk of a Ma-Hu meeting in the near future. Both Mainland Affairs Council Chair Lai Shin-yuan and National Security Council Secretary-General Su Chi separately noted that Ma's response affirmed the warming relations between Taipei and Beijing and conveyed Ma's commitment to maintaining the KMT-CCP channel. End summary.

Hu's Letter, Nothing New?

12. (C) In separate conversations July 27 and 28, both National Security Council (NSC) Secretary-General Su Chi and KMT Deputy Secretary-General Zhang confirmed the exchange of letters between Ma and Hu as leaders of their respective political parties and noted that this was, in fact, the second exchange between the two. (Note: The previous exchange took place in 2005 when Ma was first elected KMT Chairman. End note.) The letters had been received and sent via fax through KMT DSYG Zhang's office in Taipei. (See text below para 7.) The exchange of congratulatory messages was merely a courtesy, said Zhang, which has taken place with all KMT Chairs since Lee Teng-hui.

Meaning in the Exchange, Not the Message

13. (C) The significance, MAC Chair Lai Shin-yuan told ADIR in a July 28 meeting, was the exchange, not Hu's message. From the PRC's point of view, a letter to newly-elected KMT Chairs was nothing new. Lee Teng-hui was also president when he was elected KMT Chair, twice. Ma's response, however, would be the first time a sitting president had responded to a congratulatory message from a CCP General Secretary. Lai

added that Ma's letter was intended as reassurance of the warming cross-Straits relationship. Lai emphasized that despite the exchange, the Straits Exchange Foundation remains the only official organ authorized to sign agreements with the mainland. Both the Mainland Affairs Council and President Ma welcome fuller cross-Straits interactions, including the KMT-CCP forum, Lai added.

DPP: Ma Restricting Options for Taiwan's Future

14. (C) Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chair Tsai Ing-wen, in a meeting with ADIR today, disagreed with official comments that a precedent existed for this particular exchange, claiming it was the first time that letters have been exchanged between an elected Taiwan president and Chinese leaders. (Note: Although CCP General Secretaries Zhao Ziyang and Jiang Zemin sent congratulatory messages to Lee Teng-hui on his election as KMT Chair in 1988 and 1993 while he was president, Lee was not directly elected until 1996 and he did not respond to either message. End note.) Tsai worried that Ma's interaction with Hu was just one more step toward limiting Taiwan's options for the future. Ma's willingness to respond to Hu and his failure to use any title, including Chairman-elect (not to mention "President"), in that response was indicative of Ma's continued compromise of Taiwan's sovereignty and options for the future. (See reftel.)

No Ma-Hu Meeting Planned

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15. (C) NSC Su Chi, KMT DSYG Zhang, and MAC Chair Lai all downplayed the possibility of a Ma-Hu meeting. Ma is cautious, Zhang said, and China understands the situation on Taiwan. While Zhang left open the possibility of a Ma-Hu meeting during a Ma second term, he emphasized that in his meetings with PRC officials, including Wang Yi, it was clear that there was no expectation of a meeting between the two leaders. In a separate July 27 conversation with ADIR, NSC Su Chi said that Ma is still taking things one step at a time, and that the exchange does not reflect an intention on Ma's part to meet with Hu at any point in the near future. MAC Chair Lai underscored the importance of a gradual approach on cross-Straits political relations.

KMT-CCP Channel Still Important

16. (C) KMT DSYG Zhang said that the real impact of Ma's election as KMT Chair on the KMT-CCP channel depends on whom he chooses to send as a representative to the KMT-CCP forum. Zhang said that because the two sides cannot speak directly on an official basis, Beijing values the KMT-CCP channel and worries about anything that might weaken it. Su Chi told the ADIR that the exchange of letters demonstrated Ma's intention to maintain the channel between the KMT and CCP. In the larger sense, said Su Chi, this recent exchange reflects Taiwan's more general efforts to persuade the mainland to accept the concept of "mutual non-denial" and to face the reality of Taiwan's existence in more practical ways.

Text of Letters

17. (SBU) Rough translation of Hu's message to Ma, as reported by local press:

Begin text.

July 27, 2009

Dear Mr. Ma:

My warmest congratulations on your election as KMT Chairman (Zhongguo Guomin Tang). I sincerely hope both the KMT and CCP continue to promote the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations, deepen political mutual trust, seek the wellbeing of compatriots on both sides of the Straits and begin the renaissance of the Chinese people.

Hu Jintao
General Secretary
Chinese Communist Party

End text.

(SBU) Rough translation of Ma's reply to Hu, as reported by local press:

Begin text.

July 27, 2009 (Republic Year of 98)

Dear Mr. Hu Jintao, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party,

I am very much obliged to you after learning of the congratulatory message that you sent me.

Thanks to the efforts of our two parties, cross-Strait relations have evolved peacefully and steadily on the basis of the "1992 consensus" over the past four years. Such development has not only lived up to the expectations of the people on the two sides but also won the recognition of countries around the world.

From now on, we should continue to comply with public opinion and make strenuous efforts to safeguard cross-Strait peace, rebuild regional stability, and ensure the sustained development and prosperity of the two sides under the

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principles of "facing reality, bolstering mutual trust, setting aside differences, and creating a win-win situation."

With seasonal compliments, and yours respectfully,
Ma Ying-jeou

End text.

Comment

18. (C) While Taiwan officials sent the consistent message that the most recent exchange of letters between Ma and Hu was merely a courtesy, they also stressed both Ma and Beijing clearly value the KMT-CCP channel and Ma's unprecedented response signaled a desire to further improve cross-Strait relations. There remains a question of whom Ma may send to represent the KMT during KMT-CCP talks, but our interlocutors agreed that any discussion of a potential Ma-Hu meeting is premature.
WANG